



# NOAA

NATIONAL OCEANIC AND  
ATMOSPHERIC ADMINISTRATION  
UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE



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## **NOAA Announces New Rules to Strengthen American Lobster Resource**

NOAA today announced final measures to better protect the larger American lobsters and breeding females that are important for sustaining these populations. There are also new measures that will improve data collection in the fishery and make state and federal lobster fishing regulations more consistent throughout lobster management areas, most of which include a combination of state and federal waters.

American lobsters are caught from Maine to the Mid-Atlantic states, mostly in coastal and nearshore waters that are divided into seven management areas, each with its own rules. To protect larger lobsters, most areas already have a maximum size limit for landed lobsters. However, that size varies depending on where the lobster is caught. To determine if a lobster is too large to land, fishermen measure the shell that covers a lobster's body from behind the head to the beginning of the tail, called the carapace.

The first measure announced today makes the federal maximum legal size rules consistent with the lobster fishing rules for state waters. Beginning August 28, 2009 maximum legal sizes of 5 1/4 inches and 6 7/8 inches in carapace length will take effect throughout Southern New England and in offshore waters, respectively. Beginning July 1, 2010 a maximum size of 6 3/4 inches in carapace length will apply in the Outer Cape Cod lobster management area, and the offshore waters maximum size will reduce to 6 3/4 inches.

At present only fishermen in Area 1, the nearshore waters of Maine, New Hampshire and much of Massachusetts, must notch the tail fin of any egg-bearing females in a "v" shape before returning it to the water—called "v-notching." In other lobster management areas v-notching is voluntary.

The second measure announced today concerns v-notching. No changes have been made to who must v-notch or to the zero-tolerance for landing notched lobsters in Maine. However, beginning August 28, 2009, the notch must be shallower than 1/8 inch in order to keep a v-notched lobster taken in any area other than the Outer Cape Cod management area. The current, less restrictive 1/4 inch standard will apply to the Outer Cape Cod management area until July 1, 2010, when the new standard of 1/8 inch will become effective.

The revisions to both maximum size and to the landing of v-notched animals are intended to allow additional opportunities for lobsters to produce young and help replenish the population. They will also make state and federal requirements more consistent with each other.

The third new measure requires all federal lobster dealers to submit weekly electronic reports for all lobster they purchase from vessel owners with federal permits. These reporting requirements will be new for about 29 percent of all federal lobster dealers, providing more complete information on lobster landings and improved understanding of lobster stock size.

The new dealer reporting requirements take effect January 1, 2010, coinciding with the reporting period for all other federal seafood dealers, and providing some time for affected dealers to adjust to the new requirements.

NOAA understands and predicts changes in the Earth's environment, from the depths of the ocean to the surface of the sun, and conserves and manages our coastal and marine resources. Visit <http://www.noaa.gov>.

